

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HJM 4001

As Reported by House Committee On:
State Government & Tribal Affairs

Brief Description: Requesting the state and the legislative authorities of each county to promote the recognition and celebration of older adults.

Sponsors: Representatives O'Brien, McCoy, Roberts, Darneille, Dickerson, Morrell, Liias, Appleton, Simpson and Moeller.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

State Government & Tribal Affairs: 1/22/09, 2/10/09 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requests the state and legislative authority of each county to promote recognition and celebration of older adults.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT & TRIBAL AFFAIRS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Hunt, Chair; Appleton, Vice Chair; Armstrong, Ranking Minority Member; Alexander, Hurst, Miloscia and Newhouse.

Staff: Marsha Reilly (786-7135)

Background:

Washington's population of people aged 65 and older is growing. The 1990 census reported that age group to number 571,403, and by the 2000 census, the number increased to 662,148. The intercensal study estimated that in 2008, Washington's population aged 65 and over, numbered 780,524, or 11.85 percent of the state's population. The number of older adults is expected to reach 818,437 by 2010, 1.23 million by 2020, and over 1.66 million by 2030.

Summary of Bill:

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

The executive branch of the state and the legislative authorities of each county are urged to support a comprehensive, statewide effort that will engage the public and private sectors to:

- celebrate older age, recognize the value of older adults, and adequately respect their contributions to society;
- encourage people of all ages to prepare for retirement and old age;
- develop "age-sensitive" service infrastructures that support people as they age;
- establish and adopt existing services to recognize and accommodate the needs of older adults;
- build and adapt physical infrastructures that encourage active, healthy aging, and support people as they age;
- promote creative ways for the state's aging population to utilize their talents, skills, and experience in both paid and unpaid roles;
- promote flexibility in the workplace to accommodate and support the vital role played by family caregivers; and
- promote the health and well-being of older adults.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) The baby boomers are aging. There are talents and expertise in that group that can be used to serve the country and this state. It is important to encourage governments to provide infrastructure, access, and opportunities so that people aged 65 and older can contribute to their communities in a good way.

The Washington Association of Area Agencies on Aging supports the bill. Demographics are driving us and by 2030 our state's population will grow by 36 percent, our elderly population by 133 percent. It will redefine how we look at work, retirement, and leisure. It will alter housing and living arrangements, challenge our health care systems, and probably reshape our economy. It is a good idea to engage in this discussion. Some work has already begun on how we evolve into this new demographic timeframe.

The American Association of Retired Persons supports the bill. According to the U.S. Census the current population of those 65 and older will more than double by 2030. This speaks to the changes necessary to assure an opportunity to age with dignity and respect. It is imperative to plan now for successful aging by addressing the needs of older adults for housing, transportation, recreation, physical activity, and easy access to amenities. Doing this will enable older people to stay active longer and to continue to contribute to society.

Washington Senior citizens support the bill. Seniors are the mainstay of active volunteerism. Thousands of older persons are raising grandchildren and saving the state a huge amount of money in foster care. Most advertisements for retirement homes address the children of older persons rather than the senior citizens themselves, which is demeaning.

Washington State Senior Citizens' Lobby supports the bill. This population is very active and very vulnerable. Issues of dependence and independence come into play. This population, as a reflection of the 20th century, saw depression, war, and major achievements in our country. It is also the branch to the 21st century. Statistics indicate that in 1909 the median age was 44. This has changed. Seniors serve in all levels of government and work for the betterment of Washington.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Armstrong, prime sponsor; Dennis Mahar, Washington Association of Area Agencies on Aging; Peggy Quan, American Association of Retired Persons; and Ruth Shearer and Walt Bowen, Washington State Senior Citizens' Lobby.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.